



## MICHIGAN CHAPTER

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October 27th, 2021

To: Chairman Joe Bellino and Members of the Committee

RE: Support for House Bills 4715-16, Enabling Community Solar in Michigan

On behalf of our 150,000 members and supporters in Michigan, the Sierra Club expresses our support for House Bills 4715-16.

House Bills 4715-16 will make solar energy more accessible to all Michiganders by fully enabling community solar projects. These projects are currently precluded by state law which gives exclusive control over community energy projects to utility companies. Under this legislation, locally-permitted community-owned solar projects would be possible, creating jobs, increased property tax revenues, environmental benefits, and reduced costs to energy bills.

Community solar programs and these bills address many barriers that prevent households from adopting rooftop solar, such as people who can't afford the large up-front costs, who are renting, who live in a community with restrictive homeowner association rules, have shaded rooftops, or don't qualify for standard financing solutions. These bills will finally give customers the tools needed to break down barriers and go solar and save. Interested parties could participate in a shared solar installation located somewhere else in their community and receive a credit on their utility bill for their share of the power produced, and in doing so, reduce electricity bills and lower household energy burden - which is especially high in Michigan for both rural and low income communities.

Along with the opportunity to allow more businesses, institutions, and communities to go solar, the opportunity for economic gain cannot be ignored. A recent study done by Michigan State University found that the installation and ongoing maintenance of community solar projects in Michigan would create 18,500 well-paying jobs and contribute \$1.4 billion to the economy over the next 30 years. Furthermore, Michigan is currently leading the Midwest with rural jobs coming from clean energy. Targeted policy and programmatic focus on serving low-income and rural consumers is necessary to successfully expand community solar's reach to those most burdened by high energy bills. Labor-intensive employment sectors, like renewables, can decrease inequality by creating training and employment opportunities for low-income communities. When hiring and placing community solar projects locally, these projects help shore up neighborhood housing and create local jobs and economic opportunity where they are often greatly needed.

We ask for your support of these bills and look forward to working with you all in getting them over the finish line. These bills will be scored by the Sierra Club.

Sincerely,

Tim Minotas  
Deputy Legislative and Political Director, Sierra Club Michigan Chapter